

CHAPTER XII

CULTURE

BY "culture" is meant the store of traditions, ideas and habits which is passed on from generation to generation, not by way of inheritance, but as a hand-to-hand gift. The term embraces all that we understand by civilization—almost all that is included in our religious, moral, artistic and industrial lives. Culture, like complexion, has been acquired from our environment, but from an environment not only of things, but of men—of human society, as well as of material conditions. Civilization has been developed by the successive inventions of individual men, just as the multi-formity of the animal and the vegetable kingdom has sprung from the physical variations of individual organisms. If we characterize as "natural"⁵⁵ the ordinary balancing of instincts which is to be observed amongst the lower animals, culture may be described as "artificial."⁵⁵ It rests upon the effects of habit in enhancing the influence of certain instincts, and in diminishing correspondingly the influence of others. The reproductive instinct, for instance, prompts male and female to come together at the age of puberty: urged by the instinctive desire to make the most of life, culture has postponed the date of marriage. It has conducted man to a pinnacle far above the station of the brutes: but it has led him along devious paths of error—Undisciplined